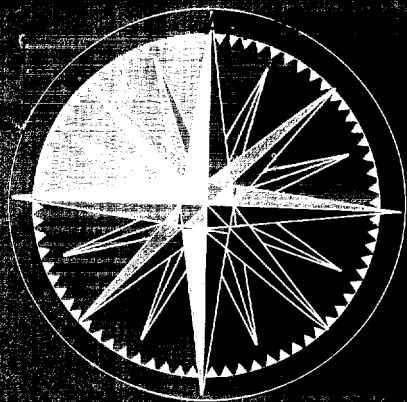


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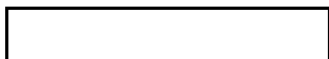
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# SPECIAL REPORT

SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND INDEPENDENCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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**SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND INDEPENDENCE**

The long crisis over Southern Rhodesia may be building to a climax. Spurred by African-governed Nyasaland's impending independence, Ian Smith's right-wing government in white-ruled Southern Rhodesia apparently is thinking of declaring the territory independent in early July. Britain, which retains nominal sovereignty even though Southern Rhodesia has had virtually complete autonomy for 40 years, would then be faced with a choice between opposing such an act of rebellion with economic sanctions or military force, or acquiescing in the move and thereby alienating the non-white members of the Commonwealth. Constitutional maneuverings have tended to obscure the widening gulf between the powerful white minority and the inarticulate black majority which threatens Southern Rhodesia's stability over the long run regardless of the outcome of the independence issue.

The Constitutional Position

Southern Rhodesia's constitutional status is shrouded in a fog of legalisms and conventions. Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company explored, colonized, developed, and administered the territory until 1923, when it was turned into a British crown colony. The 1923 constitution gave Southern Rhodesia its own legislature, army, and police force and otherwise provided for almost complete internal autonomy. As the grantor of the constitution, the British Government retained a theoretical right to intervene in the colony's affairs, and the document itself gave London a veto power over legislation affecting Africans. These rights were never formally exercised, however, and over the years it became a convention that Britain would not legislate for Southern Rhodesia without the consent of the territory's government.

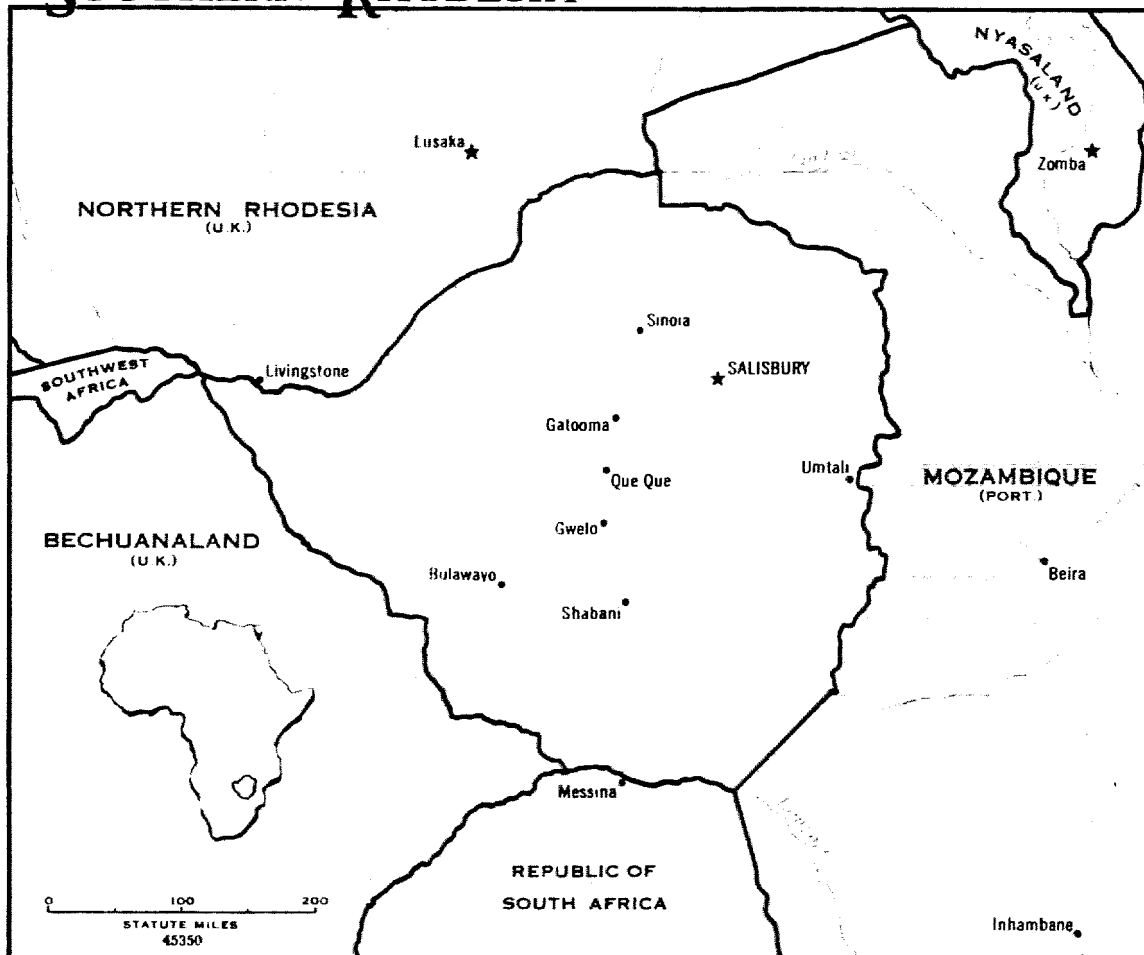
Since 1931 the colony has undertaken limited diplomatic activities, and until 1953, when it federated with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, its prime minister sat in on Commonwealth conferences. Thus, notwithstanding its nominal colonial status, Southern Rhodesia is not a dependency in the usual sense.

Southern Rhodesian whites, who currently number about 220,000, have always assumed that the territory is headed for eventual independence, but Britain could never bring itself to grant independence when the vast African majority (almost four million at present) was without any voice in the government. At the same time, the convention against British intervention rendered London almost powerless to secure an improvement in the African position. In practice it could do so only by making balancing concessions to the whites.

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## SOUTHERN RHODESIA



Fourteen Africans--none of them with any standing in the nationalist movement--now sit in the legislature under a constitution approved in 1961. Britain obtained this concession--which white Rhodesians considered a "major step"--only by giving up almost all its limited veto power over legislation--a move the British apparently regarded merely as formalization of a long-standing convention. The Southern Rhodesian prime minister, however, presented it to the white elec-

torate as one more step on the road to independence, and it was approved in a referendum on this basis.

In other ways the territory has edged closer to independence. When the ill-starred Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was dissolved last December, Southern Rhodesia resumed control of functions concerned with defense, foreign relations, and customs, which had been delegated to the federal government in 1953. Early this

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year Britain removed one more symbol of the territory's dependent status by agreeing that it would no longer be called a colony--another acknowledgment of an accomplished fact.

Thus, over the years Southern Rhodesia has acquired almost all the substance of independence, while the form of it has remained elusive. The whites entered the federation in 1953 partly because they thought this larger entity had a better chance of attaining independence. Now, after the collapse of the federation, they see both Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia on the threshold of independence under African control while Southern Rhodesia after 40 years of independence in all but name, apparently is to be kept waiting indefinitely.

Such developments are particularly galling to people who have never really believed that Africans are capable of running their own affairs. As a result, the whites' exasperation with Britain has risen sharply, and their emotional attachment to the independence goal has become steadily stronger. It is this attachment which provides the fuel for the government's current drive.

#### White Politics

White politics are dominated by two related issues: independence and racial policy. Given the emotional atmosphere among the whites, no one can expect to appeal successfully to the overwhelmingly white electorate unless he promises to work for im-

mediate independence and for the preservation of white control. As the pressures on the white position from within and without have become stronger, there has been a gradual drift to the right.

Southern Rhodesia's governing party, the Rhodesian Front, came to power in December 1962 by ousting a long-entrenched party composed of moderate whites and a few fairly conservative Africans. Extreme conservatives dominate the Front, which is an amalgam of elements who had never previously held power. Most of the ministers are wealthy tobacco farmers; few are particularly competent in their government jobs. The spectrum inside the party runs from Winston Field, a high-principled paternalist who is widely liked by both whites and Africans, to advocates of policies closely resembling South African apartheid. Field headed the Front government until last April, but he did not push hard enough for independence to satisfy the controlling right wing, which ousted him. Ian Smith, his successor, immediately evinced a very conservative racial outlook and vigorously took up the independence cry.

The Smith government's control of the 65-member legislature is open to challenge. The Front holds 35 seats to the opposition's 27, and there are three independents who would vote against the government on any crucial issue. If three members of the Front were to vote against Smith--and there are three, including Field, who say they would do

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so if the government declares its independence unilaterally--they could vote him out of office.

The make-up of the legislature does not reflect the mood of the whites, however. The opposition, led by former Prime Minister Whitehead, has little following except among urban white intellectuals and a few Africans. The legislature is not scheduled to meet before late July, and Whitehead's party would be swamped if Smith called an election on the independence issue before then.

Waiting in the wings is Sir Roy Welensky, the last federal prime minister and the most popular political figure in the territory. The ebullient Welensky is the only man who might have the strength to buck the reactionary trend and get away with it. Yet Welensky himself is a cautious moderate at best, and his outspokenness while he was prime minister earned him the bitter enmity of the Africans. Moreover, he himself doubts that he could lead the opposition to victory over the Rhodesian Front except by adopting a "me-too" platform on the independence and race policy issues.

Potential opposition to the Front thus has three focuses: Welensky, who would have trouble getting any meaningful support from the Africans; Whitehead, respected by moderate Africans but politically dead in the territory as a whole; and Field, who probably enjoys the broadest range of good will but who seems

to lack the strength to meet the Rhodesian Front head on. There is no sign that these heterogeneous elements have managed to unite against the Front, so for the moment Smith still holds the initiative.

Pressure for Independence

The positions of both London and Salisbury on the independence issue are clear. Britain has not laid down absolute conditions, but it clearly will not grant independence until African prospects for further political advancement are much better than they are now. Prime Minister Smith is unwilling to give the Africans any greater opportunities and indeed would like to circumscribe those rights they already have. Negotiations of a sort are still in progress, but few observers expect a resolution of these differences.

There are signs that Smith and his associates are planning to break the impasse by declaring unilateral independence. The first logical moment for such a move would be just before Nyasaland's independence on 6 July.

Smith appears to be whipping up popular disgust at alleged British perfidy, using as examples such actions as London's failure to invite Smith to the Commonwealth prime ministers' conference in July.

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### Consequences of Moving Alone

Inside Southern Rhodesia, a declaration of independence would produce a spate of resignations by important officials, reportedly including the heads of both the army and the air force. Lower ranking military officers would probably be divided, and the military establishment would be unable to act decisively. The 5,000-man police force would probably follow the government.

The Africans are far too weak to pose any serious threat to the government, although there might be a few momentary outbreaks of some magnitude. Southern Rhodesian Africans outside the territory reportedly would set up a government-in-exile; this would probably be recognized by a good many states in Africa and elsewhere. Southern Rhodesia would come in for vehement condemnation from black African states, and there would be pressure for sanctions similar to that in the South African issue.

Few states--probably not even Portugal and South Africa, which intend to maintain white rule in adjoining territories--would recognize Smith's government. The British have said they would regard a declaration of independence as an act of rebellion.

Diplomatic and international criticism by itself would not weigh too heavily with the Smith government. The crucial factor is the amount of practical pressure brought to bear, and here

the initiative lies almost exclusively with Britain. Britain is easily the territory's most important trading partner (South Africa is second); is the most important source of public and private capital; supplies a guaranteed market and preferential tariff treatment for its most important export, tobacco; and is the only country which could conceivably send in troops.

### Britain's Dilemma

The British clearly are not sure how to deal with a unilateral declaration of independence. Prime Minister Douglas-Home allegedly has said he might acquiesce in Southern Rhodesian independence but for his fear that this might break up the Commonwealth by precipitating a wholesale withdrawal of indignant non-white members.

On the other hand, to move against Salisbury even in the economic sphere--much less in the military--could alienate important elements in the prime minister's own Conservative Party on the eve of the UK's elections. To treat the territory's white inhabitants as enemies, in effect, would be repugnant to much of the British "establishment" and damaging to some British financial interests.

Douglas-Home probably hopes the issue can be postponed until after Britain's October elections, or at least until after the Commonwealth conference in July. Indeed, if the Smith government does not declare its

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independence in July, the crisis will probably come to a head again just before Northern Rhodesia's independence on 24 October--i.e., right at the time of the British elections. Should the Labor Party win in Britain, it would take a tougher line with Smith, although party leaders have not spelled out what they would do.

If independence is declared, the Conservative government in London seems unlikely to do much more than cut its modest aid programs and end the preferential treatment given to Southern Rhodesian tobacco. The latter move would add one more element of uncertainty to the territory's economic outlook, which has been troubled by political problems for several years. Rhodesian Front spokesmen say they expect an upswing in investment as soon as independence is achieved, but this would not occur if there were any African unrest and would not occur suddenly in any case. South Africa might provide some economic help in order to keep a buffer state operating on its northern frontier, but could not fill the gap left by a withdrawal of British support.

The staying power of the Rhodesian Front itself is open to some question. Its leaders must present themselves as the injured party in order to rally enough support from local whites, and London is doing its best not to do anything which the Front might use as the final provocation. Moreover, the Front's present leaders, emotional and

inexperienced as they are, may not be willing to take the final step when the moment comes. If they do opt for independence, they might not be able to maintain their cohesiveness and momentum in the face of any significant outside pressure. Failure anywhere along the line would discredit the Front and might pave the way for its replacement by a slightly more moderate government.

### Black-White Relations

Failure of the independence gambit, however, would not necessarily produce a reversal of the reactionary trend among whites on racial issues. Southern Rhodesia will remain a sore point in relations between the West and the Afro-Asian nations until the gap between the races is reduced, and all indications are that it is still widening.

The whites in the past two years have strengthened their control over African nationalist groups. Most of the nationalist leaders are now under detention or in exile, and their badly divided movement is drifting without any apparent long-range plans.

Many of the top African leaders still are not fully committed to violence; they are still hoping vainly for a *deus ex machina* (i.e. Britain) to call a constitutional conference of all parties, at which Africans will be given something approximating majority rule. Other leaders, however, are thinking more and more in terms of a violent confron-

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tation between white and black.

Given the present strength and determination of the government, neither negotiation nor violence seems a particularly promising avenue to African power. Even a successor to the Smith government would have to make strenuous efforts to keep the African "in his place." Un-

like that on the independence question, the white attitude toward Africans is not significantly amenable to outside influence. Thus, unless the whites undergo a wholly unforeseen loss of nerve, no sudden change in their outlook seems likely, and the racial gap will be widened further. 25X1

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